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FOREIGN RELATIONS

Bay of Pigs Revisited

The disastrous failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion was all the more embarrassing to John F. Kennedy because, by some widely believed accounts he lost his nerve and doomed the expedition by calling off promised U.S. air cover. Last week the President's brother made an attempt to



INVADER PENABAZ

The linen has never been washed. The version of what happened, said Attorney General Robert Kennedy in an interview: "I can say unequivocally that President Kennedy never withdrew U.S. air cover. . . . There never were any plans made for U.S. air cover, so there was nothing to withdraw."

That statement of the case sounded pretty firm and final—except that it contradicted the accounts of many other people, including some members of the Bay of Pigs expedition. One of them, Manuel Penabaz, charged a few weeks ago that "we were betrayed." The invasion's leaders, he said, "had been assured of U.S. air cover." Dr. Manuel Antonio de Varona, a member of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, insisted that the U.S. had indeed assured the invaders of "full air control," though another invasion leader, Manuel Artime, declared that no U.S. air support had been promised. Adding to the confusion, Publisher Jack W. Gore of the Fort Lauderdale News said that in May 1961 the President himself had told a group of seven Florida newspaper executives, gathered for a confidential White House briefing, that planned air cover had been canceled by presidential order.

on the morning of the invasion. At a press conference, President Kennedy firmly declared that "there was no such conversation." Targets of Opportunity. Whether or not the invaders were promised U.S. air cover, they were indeed promised air cover of a sort. It was to be provided by some 20 obsolescent B-26 bombers, resurrected from U.S. Air Force storage by the CIA. The pilots were mostly Cuban exiles, but some were U.S. citizens (at least one U.S. pilot was killed during the invasion attempt). The bombers took off from a CIA-managed base at Posadero, Nicaragua.

The basic mission of the clandestine bomber force was to drop Castro's planes on the ground before the invasion was launched. The CIA's invasion planners decided that the first three days of repeated strikes were targets of opportunity. After that, the bombers were supposed to provide air support for the invaders as they moved inland. But shortly before the invasion, in a way, White House officials were dropping the B-26 force. The first day of strikes, the day before the invasion, the United Nations, the day after the second strike, the day after the third day of the invasion, the day after the fourth day of the invasion, the day after the fifth day of the invasion, the day after the sixth day of the invasion, the day after the seventh day of the invasion, the day after the eighth day of the invasion, the day after the ninth day of the invasion, the day after the tenth day of the invasion, the day after the eleventh day of the invasion, the day after the twelfth day of the invasion, the day after the thirteenth day of the invasion, the day after the fourteenth day of the invasion, the day after the fifteenth day of the invasion, the day after the sixteenth day of the invasion, the day after the seventeenth day of the invasion, the day after the eighteenth day of the invasion, the day after the nineteenth day of the invasion, the day after the twentieth day of the invasion, the day after the twenty-first day 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ninety-eighth day of the invasion, the day after the ninety-ninth day of the invasion, the day after the hundredth day of the invasion.

Over the beach the B-26 force was shattered by Castro's T-33 jet trainers. Offshore stood at least one U.S. aircraft carrier, and its jet fighters might have been enough, even that late, to reverse the outcome—but they remained on the sidelines. The invaders' appeals for help—"Mad Dog Four, May Day, Red Beach"—went unheeded. According to the official version, the U.S. Navy was there to defend the invasion ships in case they were discovered and attacked in international waters. It was not supposed to aid the landing.

A final plea for help went out from the invasion force's Colonel José Pedro San Román. It was denied. In a burst of futile anger, San Román cried back into his radio "And you, sir, are a son of a bitch."

40 Minutes on Target. From the known and unproved facts, two unpleasant conclusions emerge:

If the score of B-26s was indeed the only air cover contemplated for the invasion, then the U.S. planners, including

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who reportedly cleared the plan, stand convicted of incompetence. They knew that Castro had a score of missiles, and they also knew that after the 1958 flight from Puerto Cabezas the Cubans would have easily acquired fuel left to them after the 1958 flight from Puerto Cabezas. In spite of the gross inadequacy of the B-26 air cover plan to begin with, the



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"Rewriting History." Bobby Kennedy's oversimplified statement in the case stirred up strong reactions. In a TV interview, Dwight Eisenhower charged off any blame for the Bay of Pigs to the Kennedy Administration and contended that his support for the Cuban revolution was not a plan but a "gentle type of action" in the Cuban revolution. At least two plans had been talked up by the Eisenhower days: a "gentle type of action" and a direct invasion with U.S. air and logistics support. The final decision fell to Kennedy.

In the Senate, Minority Leader Robert McNamara promised a personal investigation, with the blessing of the Republican Policy Committee. "Cuba is very much unfinished business," he said. Arizona's Barry Goldwater demanded an investigation by the Senate Armed Services Committee, charged Bobby Kennedy and the Administration with attempts at "the rewriting of history." Georgia's Senator Richard Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, retorted that he saw no useful purpose in "rehauding this